

THE PANDEMIC EMERGENCY AS A COLLECTIVE DISORIENTING DILEMMA. FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY

IL CORPO NELLA PEDAGOGIA DELL'EMERGENZA E DEL POST EMERGENZA: PROFILI EDUCATIVI E INCLUSIVI

Alessandra Romano

Department of Education, Humanities and Intercultural Communication,
University of Siena
alessandra.romano2@unisi.it

Abstract

The contribution explores the emerging issues of distance learning that was heavily used in the lockdown phase due to the Covid – 19 emergencies. It outlines the path towards the integration of digital learning in different school levels and at university and explores the knots of these transformative processes. The focus is on the conditions and systemic actions to support faculty, teachers, researchers to transform their perspectives to go through within the “emergency” scenarios. What to “learn” and “unlearn” from the emergency context that the professors went through? What experiences and practices have been particularly promising in order to support school and university teachers struggling with a collective disorienting dilemma, which for them has translated in a professional urgency (Sibilio, & Zollo, 2020)? In order to answer to these questions, it is briefly described an experience of professional development and organizational change of a community composed by 40 faculty members in the phase 1 and 2 of the national lockdown in between March and July 2020. The conclusions discuss the main outcomes of this experience with a specific focus on transformative processes elicited and produced. Suggestions and reflections are shared, useful for the design of online learning programs, able to respond to the new instances of preventions from the virus, safety, physical distancing and expanded social relationships required by the second wave of the pandemic.

Il contributo approfondisce le questioni emergenti della didattica a distanza a cui si è fatto massiccio ricorso nella fase del *lockdown* dovuto all'emergenza da Covid - 19. Delinea il percorso verso l'integrazione della didattica digitale all'interno dei diversi ordini di scuola e all'università, ed esplora i nodi cruciali di questi processi trasformativi. L'attenzione verte sul cambiamento di prospettive che professionisti dei processi di apprendimento, docenti, insegnanti, si trovano a dover attraversare all'interno di scenari definiti di “emergenza”. Che cosa “apprendere” e “disapprendere” dal contesto emergenziale che i docenti hanno attraversato? Quali esperienze e pratiche sono state particolarmente promettenti per poter supportare i docenti di scuola e universitari alle prese con un dilemma disorientante collettivo, che per loro si è tradotto in un'urgenza professionale (Sibilio, & Zollo, 2020)?

Al fine di rispondere a queste domande, si descriverà un'esperienza di sviluppo professionale e cambiamento organizzativo di una comunità di 40 docenti universitari nella fase 1 e nella fase 2 del *lockdown* nazionale comprese tra marzo e luglio 2020.

Il paragrafo conclusivo argomenta i principali risultati di quest'esperienza in termini di processi di cambiamento interni alle comunità di docenti e le tipologie di esiti trasformativi che hanno comportato. Si propongono riflessioni utili ai fini di un'integrazione della progettazione didattica digitale che risponda all'esigenze di prevenzione della diffusione del virus, sicurezza, distanziamento fisico e relazionalità sociale espansa, che l'aumento dei contagi sta ponendo alle soglie della seconda ondata della pandemia.

Keywords

online learning; digital learning; distance learning; Higher Education; intercorporeality; embodiment; Faculty Community of Learning.

1. “Managing the unexpected”. The pandemic emergency as collective disorienting dilemma

This article deepens the emerging questions of the distance learning which was spread during the different phases of the *lockdown* due to the pandemic emergency caused by the Covid-19. It articulates the path towards the integration of the digital learning in the various levels of the school and of the university, and explores the key-points of these transformative processes. The focus is on the perspectives transformation that professionals of learning processes, instructional designers, teachers, faculty, are forced to navigate in scenarios with high levels of “urgency”. What to “learn” and to “unlearn” from the emergent contexts that teachers came through?

Which experiences and practices have been particularly promising to support the school teachers and the university faculty facing a collective disorienting dilemma, which for most of them meant a professional urgency (Sibilio, & Zollo, 2020)? The second section of the contribution presents an example of an experience of faculty development that involved a community composed by 40 university professors in the phases 1 and 2 of the *lockdown*.

The pandemic emergency due to the spread of the Covid-19 is producing an epochal change that is transforming in unreversible terms the nature, the objectives, the scientific, didactic and organizational practices of *Higher Education* systems. Facing very uncertain, ambiguous, temporary scenarios with fast changes highlights the weaknesses and the contradictions of “containing the situation” and opens up issues that require to be dealt with the rigor of the scientific methods.

From this point of view, the university, like other educational institutions, is a learning organization, which has been able to align itself with the need to experiment with new and technologically rich methods to ensure didactic continuity, far away from self-referential and nostalgic visions of transmissive or in presence teaching (Watkins, & Marsick, 2020).

Emergency remote teaching is not online learning (Hodges *et al.*, 2020). It has been an adaptive challenge for which there were not prior technical solutions (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2019). It required to professors, such as to all organizational actors of the *Higher Education* systems (administrative staff, technical staff, instructional designers, Ph.D. students, fellows) to test their ability to learn and to change in high level of ambiguity and uncertainty environments. Professors tried to address an adaptive challenge (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2019) first with technical solutions, but only because those were all what was available at that time.

It is a matter of fact that the revolutions and the adjustments required by emergency remote teaching can be - and have been for many - an opportunity for change, development and innovation. Teachers who were resistant to the use of e-learning platforms have converted to the potential of building collaborative online learning settings, discussion forums, open access learning paths, e-community. Those who thought that Moodle or other platforms worked only as a repository of slides showed in class, had the opportunity to validate their perspectives and to experiment with new practices of use, in which they can interact with students both in synchronous and asynchronous (Hodges *et al.*, 2020).

The anchoring to lines of research that study how and under what conditions people learn to navigate change and transform their way of thinking, acting and interpreting reality through processes of validation and critical reflection (Mezirow, 2003; 2016) allows us to interpret the emergency scenario as a “collective disorienting dilemma” (Watkins, & Marsick, 2020). Our investigation focus is not only and exclusively, therefore, on the ways of doing teaching, on the methodologies, on the technologies that, in coping with the measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic, have been implemented and have inevitably changed the way of understanding the relationship with students, with artifacts, with devices, with classrooms, the new “situated” and incorporated doing of learning - teaching. We intercept as objects of investigation the practices of the use of technologies, the adoption of specific teaching methods and the perspectives that teachers and professors have on themselves, on their professional role and on their positioning within volatile contexts.

For example, there are teachers and professors who have become familiar with *Padlets* and virtual whiteboards, jamboards, online survey systems, to keep audience participation constantly alive in small, medium and large classrooms, connected online in synchronous and asynchronous mode. Faced with these outcomes, nobody could ever say that this learning, even instrumental, if we want, has not produced transformative outcomes.

How can the technical and instrumental outcomes that have been achieved be valorized and exploited, especially in anticipation of a more marked change towards the incorporation and integration of digital teaching and online learning?

2. Facing the emergency remote teaching. Learning as a strategic leverage for innovation

The formula of the improperly defined “social distancing” - in reality physical distancing for preventing the contagion - represented the paradigm on which we had to build new habits without being prepared to abandon familiar patterns (Ellerani, & Cristante, 2020).

The label of “social distancing” oriented public opinion towards a position of insecurity and uncertainty, in which the adjective “social” returned the sensation of an unheard-of collective fact, a collective cumulative adversity which concerned indiscriminately all (Felitti, 2017).

PC screens, domestic rooms have suddenly become hybrid: highly technological workplaces and exclusive areas of affection, places of accompaniment and support, as in the many examples of home schooling, where parents have joined the teachers, or have been invested with the function of “home scaffolding” for the continuity of distance learning activities (Ellerani, & Cristante, 2020).

Faced with the disorientation of the invisible virus that struck everyone, in the face of the most epochally disorienting scenario since the 2001 attack, how *Higher Education* systems could help to preserve “didactic continuity” and “reduce distance” to satisfy a need of learning, knowledge and points of reference?

The need to control the pandemic (and above all the public, institutional, media communication on the pandemic) was defined in relation to the fear of the contagion, therefore, to the concrete, tangible possibility, experienced as an uncontrollable threat, of the risk of death (Colonna, 2020). The need (and the obligation) of confinement translated into the *lockdown* that defined various inversion of meaning, modifying the subjective relationship with space and time, since the outside world became a territory of fight and contagion. In addition to domestic confinement, remote working and smart working was encouraged and the transition, abruptly, to distance learning as emergency remote teaching (Hodges *et al.*, 2020).

Such sudden passages generate spaces of non-bridging interpretative “empty”, in which the possibility of reaching the outside was deferred from decree to decree. Faced with the void of guarantors of signification, which helped tolerate the habit to the emergency and would ensure continuity of points of reference, the last aspect of everyday life to be invested was sociality, which in *lockdown* is transformed into surrogate sociality. A sociability that is expressed in social media, in the form of teleworking, of the abbreviated communication exchange: the absence of physical social relationship - with all its existential significance - was correlated to the sense of disorientation and the perception of suspended lives (Ellerani, 2020, p. 35).

Social media, mass media, the digital world have become the elective path of connection with the *outside world*: it is through these that the news on the pandemic trend were reported, and it is in this that unconscious exploitation of opinions was recorded.

Studies on pandemic scenarios have shown that the best system for obtaining adherence to the infection containment measures was collective self-regulation (Mannarini *et al.*, 2020).

The policies of Covid-19 emergency management, however, have not always contemplated this principle. Indeed, institutional communications transmitted over broadband often had a “paternalistic” attitude towards citizens, believing that compliance with the rules could only be achieved through external control (*ibidem*). It is an approach based on a “psychology of fragil-

ity” (Reicher, Drury & Stott, 2020), according to which individuals are not autonomously able to respect restrictions or tolerate them: they are generally unable to understand the complexity of pandemic emergency, they act irrationally and impulsively; ultimately, they need a guiding authority and the dissemination of messages of terror (Mannarini *et al.*, 2020).

At the end of the first wave of the pandemic, social media, *fake news* and the virtual bulimia of online news have preserved their importance as a filter of knowledge of the outside-more-than-external world and as a source of all information on which to build understanding and meanings. In the race for the most clicked title or post, we have been “bombarded” by narratives and ways of reporting the news that have been chasing more sensationalism aimed at building adhesion/consensus and which have polarized visions and attitudes, creating curves of fans as at the stadium (more than keeping the attention on planning of systemic and institutional actions), which plunged us into phenomena more than helping us understand them. The media treatment of the pandemic and its effects has turned into an almost total coverage of the events connected with the spread of Covid-19, contemplating the fixed presence of experts in the media and in programs during the *lockdown* period (until May 2020) and in the subsequent period (June-July 2020). The spread of the pandemic digitally and medically was perhaps even faster than the physical spread, in a “super-globalized” scenario such as the current one (Latour, 2020, p. 1).

In the first days of the pandemic, digital technology was told by the media and institutions as the technological framework capable of keeping continuing, while remaining closed at home, the fundamental activities that govern our daily lives. Social media made possible to maintain connection and sharing and to elicit a “sense of community belonging” in the general disorientation. The e-learning platforms made possible to bring teaching in presence “remotely”.

This originally idealized “honeymoon” narrative did not take long to show all the limits of pre-critical views. The first limit has concerned digital divide and social inequalities (Halford, & Savage, 2010): there are sociomaterial conditions that impact the accessibility of digital resources. Trivially, being constantly connected in a 40sqm house is different from doing it in a 150sqm apartment (Colonna, 2020). The *lockdown* made tangible a series of barriers to digital which were linked not only to the possibility of connecting, but which concerned a whole series of variables such as the level of familiarity and knowledge with e-learning platforms, with digital media, the accessibility of technological personal devices, the different amplitude of connections in the most diverse locations. The need for an unexpected and rapid reorganization of times, spaces, places, mobility, had accentuated marginality, gaps, latent difficulties, instability, and an increase in poverty. What inequalities has distance learning brought to light? What still remains of the “living” community at university and at school after such heated antagonisms between *presence* versus *distance*?

We have fallen into the trap of a rhetoric where there was no room for students with disabilities, the number of teachers or professors were not enough, there was no interinstitutional network, where complex issues were simplified in terms of someone who fell behind and someone who - already at risk of fragility and marginalization - was further penalized by a transformative wave of “didactic digitalization” and “digital didacticization”.

This was even more evident in the *post-lockdown*, when there was a widespread view on distance and remote learning that polarized those who were in favor *versus* those who were not in favor, antagonists like parents *versus* teachers, the hyper-tech *versus* the traditionalists, the no-masks and the epidemic-hypochondriacs. There has been a fetishization of the physicality of the face-to-face teaching that excluded to consider a hybridization and technological expansion of teaching that has already been underway for decades.

This dominant media narrative on remote teaching has resulted in some sociolinguistic and epistemological distortions: confusing the emergency remote teaching (Hodges *et al.*, 2020) that we have used as university and school institutions with online and distance learning; to think that, in the face of digital transformations that change the way of thinking and designing course and didactic actions, is permissible to have opinions that are not scientifically founded and not empirically validated.

Faced with a picture that has inevitably upset everyone, as teachers and professors we are called to analyze and validate what positioning we have assumed within contradictory arenas that became more and more similar to debates between adverse positions than to knowledge exchange forums. In our daily professional micro-practices, which digital teaching narratives have we unwittingly fed? What narratives we have shared and how these narratives have taken to the extremes discontent feelings and stuck polarized positions? The *hyperzooming* of the months of the *lockdown* was certainly the subject of widespread discontent, being always hypermedially connected in synchronous connections through the most varied platforms, which led to the false belief that people work *more* and *worse* with distance learning. The collective narrative of distance learning has been monopolized by antinomic visions: on the one hand the pole of negativity, “distance teaching as a monolithic enemy of student participation and of the quality of teaching and course design”, or as the pole of positivity, “online teaching as the driving force behind the technology of innovation”.

3. New Frontiers of Participation and Corporeality

The reflection on the relationships between digital learning, emergency remote teaching, educational urgency and accessibility calls into question an international and national literature of studies and research that is exploding in the field of educational research (Weiss *et al.*, 2020; De Filippo, Percoco, & Voce, 2020; Watkins, & Marsick, 2020). Our option involves taking a narrative look attentive to the processes of stigmatization that are repeated and strengthened in the dominant narratives spread in the complex socio-digital ecosystem.

Studies on distance and online learning offer us some consolidated assumptions: that distance teaching cannot be the online transposition of the traditional teaching methods but requires the use of technological tools and above all a different (if not innovative) approach, in which students have a central role in the autonomy of developing knowledge and skills (De Filippo, Percoco, & Voce, 2020).

Integrated digital learning is not the remote one experienced during the *lockdown*. It is a collaborative-based framework grounded on a rigorous concerted design, rooted on defined pedagogical criteria, with a focus on the incorporation of the digital component and on the sociomaterial dimensions of learning processes *inside* and *outside* the classroom. We are not talking about a replacement of face-to-face teaching, but an increase in it, an expansion of it, through the integration of digital teaching methodologies and devices. Digital devices are an integral part of didactic course design. They are not “more or less fortuitous remote operating conditions” in which to apply methods and processes already established upstream for face-to-face teaching.

It is an integration of digital learning that helps build a corporeal and embodied dimension of teaching practices in the third teaching space (Vicari, 2008). The third space construct, invoked by a conspicuous literature on the subject (Gutiérrez, 2008), expresses and thematizes the material and embodied dimension of learning spaces. Knowledge incorporated inside and outside the classroom becomes knowledge embodied in material and immaterial artefacts that every learning setting has and which is part of the learning processes (Vicari, 2008; Fabbri, & Torlone, 2020). While some narratives have used the rhetoric of the representations of distance learning as “didactics of the lack of proximity of contact”, the third space interpretative construct and the anchoring to embodied education allows to thematize the *intermaterial* dimension of digital and online learning, in which the intercorporeity between material, immaterial, digital and virtual physicality is a condition for the realization of the didactic and learning relationship (Gomez Paloma, 2020).

Gutiérrez (2008) offered the third space as a way of thinking about social actors in a given context, about their autobiographical and temporal specificities and about the way in which they could be explained in the design of an emancipatory form of educational experience. He wrote

about how design for learning in the third space could stand up to the standard rails of home and university, providing real and metaphorical roads to incorporate changing practices and communities into pedagogical design.

The thesis we are presenting here is that the intercorporeity between physical and digital presence that comes to constitute integrated digital learning is an embodiment dimension which, if designed and managed intentionally and as a reflective practice (Fabbri, & Torlone, 2020), with clear objectives in terms of learning outcomes, contributes to the improvement of teaching practices, the performance of students and the organizational innovation. A perspective intentionally oriented towards the integration and incorporation of digital learning triggers both a transformation of the subsidiary and instrumental aspects of teaching “situations”, and also a change in the substantive and methodological paradigms with which we approach the study of teaching practices (Gomez Paloma, 2020). We could talk about practices of didactic intercorporeity (Sibilio, & Zollo, 2020), to express the emergence of microcosms of interactions between teachers, professors, learners, digital bytes and physical environments, and the situated and embodied representation of this emergency. In the case of the incorporation of digital learning, we recall the definition of didactic intercorporeity to define the embodied potential of didactic interaction systems (Sibilio, & Zollo, 2020).

We saw during the *lockdown* that even during a transition to distance learning there were experiences with a high rate of experimentation. These were paths that centered the sense of experimentation with digital platforms on the centrality of the right of participation of all students and on the criterion of accessibility of multimedia, resources and educational content.

All the realities of the education sphere had to make a huge leap towards didactic experimentation, having, at the same time, to preserve the quality of interaction and complementarity of the teaching-learning processes, the entanglement between all human, non-human and more-than-human actors that make up the university learning systems and the continuous dialogue between students and professors (Di Palma, & Belfiore, 2020). In this leap, doing distance learning resulted in worrying about how to do teaching centered on learner, how to design and build expanded and distributed classrooms among all the actors (and their intercorporeity contexts) connected in the learning environments.

Involving students in digital learning activities results in the co-design of learning settings where students are editors of digital and multimedia content. The processes and methods of evaluation cannot return to usual methods, but require the effort of implementation towards rubrics, e-portfolios, shared assessment tools with a strong training value. The integration of digital teaching requires investing in the design of the learning path which is characterized by:

- a) a wide level of structuring of the activities to be carried out;
- b) a high degree of collaboration and agreement required between all the actors of the didactic network, students, professors, institutional actors;
- c) the protagonism and centrality of the learner in the technologically “thought” and “mediated” learning processes (Dell’Anna *et al.*, 2020).

4. “Online learning is the new normal”

Digital learning does not translate into a spectacularization of the contents, nor a conceptual simplification. It is much more the design of learning activities in which the dimension of engagement is the core condition of the leading role of learners.

Hence draws out a series of resistances to change, which are anchored to the antinomic polarization between teaching in presence versus distance learning. The mechanisms of antinomic polarization are based on prejudicial premises that are often distorted and not validated (Mezirow, 2003; 2016). Among these there are: - that distance learning is digital teaching (cognitive distortion); - that distance learning, and therefore digital teaching, is not a teaching of contact and

corporeality (epistemological distortion); - that distance learning puts in light all the contradictions and inadequacies of the teaching methods centered on the transmission of contents (socio-linguistic distortion). The anchoring to the theories of organizational learning (Argyris, & Schön, 1998; Fabbri, 2019) and to the contributions of transformative theory (Mezirow, 2016) induced to investigate what obstacles and defenses could organizational actors put in place especially in situations where routines are broken, and where dysfunctional practices are often applied to cope with scenarios with high uncertainty. Specifically, the approaches of transformative theory that have been interested in studying the conditions for the development of critical-reflective thinking, suggest that the use of familiar categories and past conceptualizations to interpret new problems occurs where there is a lack of perspectives sufficiently inclusive interpretations and examples of valid and validated alternatives (Watkins, & Marsick, 2020).

Faced with the digitalization of environments and learning conditions, which underwent an exponential growth in the *lockdown* and *post-lockdown* phase between March and July 2020, active and participatory online methodological approaches have found more and more space in the way of teaching that frequently encountered resistance from professors and teachers. One aspect of these resistances is that teachers tended to interpret the novelties in terms of familiar practices: to the frontal lesson in the classroom, where the teacher speaks and explains and the students listen, they replaced the video recording of the explanation as digital content to be enjoyed asynchronously or the one-way front explanation in synchronous mode. This is a type of retreat on concepts, tools and methods that are already known, in which the new is brought back until it seems like the old. There is a risk of doing “distance teaching” in the presence, applying transmissive and frontal teaching models to virtually, digitally and technologically mediated presence (Rivoltella, & Rossi, 2019).

If the resistance to innovation is based on these methodological elements, integrating digital learning into *Higher Education* systems becomes a complex problem. It is not reducible to a question of adoption based on the availability of individuals for innovation and change, or of certain technologies or platforms. Probably, the tendency to simplify the complexity of the integration of digital learning depends on the habit of assimilating it on hyper-technical schemes and models, which propose technical solutions to be implemented in one’s own teachings, or on theoretical approaches that do not clarify the much desired “instructions for use” (Ranieri, 2011). Incorporating digital learning in teaching is more about studying how learning processes and teaching methodologies change, and it inevitably involves sharing a project for change. It translates into investigative practices on “what does it mean, in terms of innovative approaches to teaching, to take these changes into account?”.

As professors, we are not always aware of what reasoning processes we apply to solve problems and how we act to solve the problems we encounter: we are often victims of that same pre-critical thinking, which uses prior assumed categories to interpret new problems and issues. We need, just like other professionals, to broaden awareness of our teaching practices, through reflection activities on them, and learn from our experience inside and outside the classroom (Brookfield, 2017; Fabbri, & Romano, 2019). In this sense, reflective approaches to encourage reflection on teaching practices (and on methodologies adopted, time management, methods and techniques of facilitation, adequacy in relation to the learning objectives, etc, ..) are used to validate diffused and active practices in collective settings and to acquire other practices and approaches. The experience reported in the next paragraph is situated in this conceptual framework.

5. Faculty Community of Learning

The experience reported here is an example of processes of change taking place in *Higher Education* systems. As researchers and professors, we situate ourselves in the conceptual paradigms of transformative (Fabbri, 2019) and collaborative research (Shani, Guerci, & Cirella,

2014): these recognize the critical-reflective positions of researchers, who do not study a field of investigation from the outside, but they are part of it, and contribute to building knowledge that is useful for producing transformative outcomes. We could not, therefore, study the changes taking place in the integration of digital learning without recognizing ourselves as organizational actors called into question by the phenomena and issues we wanted to investigate.

The experience we describe saw the active participation of 40 professors from the University of Siena, belonging to thirteen different departments. It is an experience developed within the activities of the *Faculty Community of Learning*, a professional learning community made up of full professors, associate professors, assistant professors, junior researchers, newly hired professors, coming from a variety of disciplines, from that of historical sciences and cultural heritage and that of information engineering and life sciences.

The *Faculty Community of Learning* of the assistant professors at the University of Siena is configured as a “professional collaborative apprenticeship” setting, in which each professor takes on the role of “explorer”, change agent and innovation leader in his or her degree program and department. The Author of this contribution is an active participant, interested both in the themes of innovative teaching methodologies with high levels of engagement, and in the study of leadership and dynamic governance processes within professional communities. The focus of attention will therefore be twofold, also in the narration of the path of this community.

With the unexpected spread of the coronavirus pandemic, as university professors we have responded to the urgency of synchronous and asynchronous online lessons while trying to preserve the criterion of quality teaching with a high rate of interactivity. The *Faculty Community* was the device for comparison, exchange of practices and construction of knowledge, perceived as particularly “urgent”, also in order to escape the risk to fall into the fascination of the solipsism of the university professor struggling with the remote teaching of the emergency. Trying to respond to questions related to the integration of digital learning in our courses, we have expressed training and development needs (Romano, 2020; Fabbri, & Romano, 2019). For the members of the *Faculty Community of Learning*, the need to find and confront each other even within an emergency scenario has resulted in the opening of collaborative and multi-stakeholder inquiry paths, in which to work together with colleagues interested in organizational and didactic change towards online teaching and learning models. We have started collaborative investigations on:

- (a) what are the promising models of online learning;
- (b) how to intercept and map promising teaching practices even outside the confines of one’s university or disciplinary sector;
- (c) how to investigate future teaching scenarios in relation to a *post-lockdown* reopening.

The *Faculty Community of Learning* has activated contacts with professionals and colleagues who have already network on the issues of blended and online learning, to foreshadow together which methods increase the ability to interact with students in the design of online courses (Bolisani, Fedeli, De Marchi, & Bierema, 2020). An exploratory inquiry was launched through the administration of an online survey to all professors of the departments involved and of an online survey to students. Students and technical staff were involved as facilitators of the transformative processes underway. On the one hand there is a literature that elicits us to speak not so much *about* students but *with* students, from the other hand the students point out the living problems of an emergency remote teaching and the complexities of the issues related to the accessibility of resources, contents, programs useful to support professors in envisioning how to make their teaching practice truly more accessible and inclusive (Hodges *et al.*, 2020).

The online survey administered to the faculty and the professors investigated the following dimensions:

- a) socio-demographic data (relating to professors and students);
- b) availability of access to ICT resources;
- c) home conditions of remote study and working: work environment and family environment (presence of relatives);
- d) perception of the quality of distance learning.

At the end, there was an open-ended section which asked respondents to indicate:

- a. effective online teaching practices;
- b. shortcomings of active online teaching;
- c. needs related to active online teaching;
- d. ideas and proposals for experimentation.

The study gathered 80 questionnaires completed by university professors with different scientific-disciplinary sectors and 110 questionnaires completed by students attending the bachelor's degree and the master's degree courses of twelve departments.

The answers of the students made possible to emphasize the acquisitions and the gains obtained with distance learning through online platforms and the perception of their effectiveness.

Students highlighted criticalities and limitations of teaching systems that were set up in the face of the educational urgency, and suggested improvement paths. These include how to make course contents more accessible in synchronous and asynchronous mode, how to expand the levels of sharing of materials, and online collaboration of students, how to overcome the digital divide for those who cannot access resources and technological devices necessary to participate in educational activities. As regards the aspects of perception of the quality of distance learning, the results showed a correlation between low levels of accessibility to technological resources and digital devices and lower levels of perception of the quality of distance teaching. Students' perception of the quality of distance learning also correlates positively with maintaining contact with their own group. Among the students, the 60% of the students result to own low or basic digital competences, while less than the 10% of the sample of respondents have high competences.

Among the positive notes, students' answers argued that the integration of online learning allowed to break down barriers related to space and time, also increasing the percentage of attendance. This data takes on even more value if we consider that almost 30% of the students respondent said they were "non-resident students". To these are added the "working" students who also expressed positive feedback regarding the possibility of greater personalization of the time and ways of participating in the activities. Figure 1 summarizes the facilitating factors that contribute to increase the score of the levels of perception of the quality of distance learning at the university:

PUSHER FACTORS FOR THE ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING

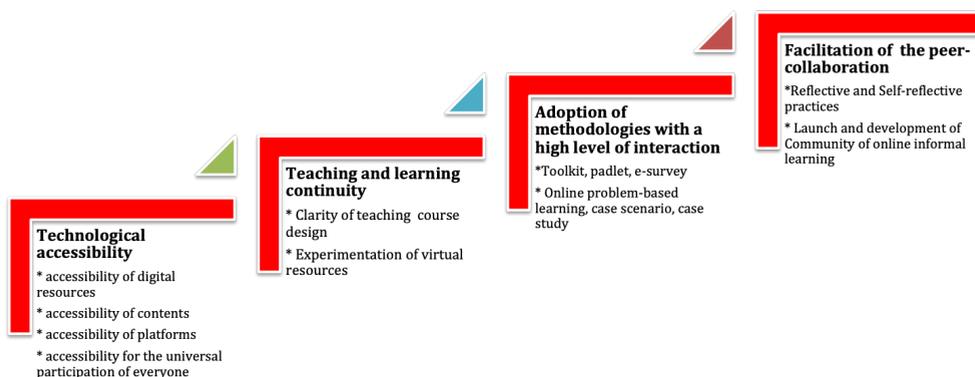


Fig. 1: Facilitating factors in online teaching and learning

This survey has limits that are important to consider for an accurate interpretation and con-

textualization of the findings. The study is based exclusively on self-report questionnaires and, despite the choice to use online-based questionnaires, the presence of a bias related to social desirability cannot be excluded (Creswell, 2015). In addition, we have seen great variability in the participation rates reported in the various departments involved. This variability in participation may have fueled a selection bias of participants, compromising the ability to generalize our results to the entire population and to consider these data as representative.

The outcome of these trajectories of collaborative inquiry resulted in the design of formal learning paths (structured in the form of the Learning Path with the release of Open B@dge) and informal learning paths (in the configuration of the meetings of the Faculty Community). Both the formal and informal path aimed at accelerating and accompanying educational and organizational transformations and the development of new methodological and design skills. Those were not linear trajectories: the methodological framework provided did not privilege a top-down approach, but a mixed learning path, bottom-up/top-down, which included the efforts to build settings, meetings on concrete issues, confusing dilemmas, successful or unsuccessful micropractices and which challenged the idea of the professor's work as an individual task (Steinert, 2014).

Blended learning in mixed contexts, between the physical context of the classroom and the expansion of the virtual connection in synchronous and asynchronous, is not the same as teaching completely online. The blended learning and teaching of the *post-lockdown* phase constitutes an approach of the structurally high-tech hybrid presence, in which "the contact" is postponed to virtually mediated modalities, with specific characteristics of its own. These are material conditions that require the opening of collaborative, transdisciplinary research trajectories. How to design online distance learning is not immediately attributable to the familiar modalities and categories with which the role of the professors was interpreted until before the start of the pandemic.

6. Conclusions

On the threshold of the new rise in the contagion curve and in the face of the "threat" - feared as such - of new *lockdown*, the contribution articulates a reflection on how and under what conditions integrated digital learning can constitute multiple and intersectional trajectories of organizational and didactic innovation in *Higher Education* systems.

In this regard, a collaborative research experience of a community of university professors dealing with the challenges posed by remote distance learning and the need to equip themselves to cope with a process of organizational change was briefly described. The experience presented has an illustrative value, although it has limits in terms of generalizability and representativeness of the results.

In the case presented, the Faculty Community is the fundamental junction that made it possible to analyze and unpack the processes of learning from the experience of the professors, the construction of knowledge and the social structures that made the organizational change possible. As a collaborative learning and research device, the Faculty Community has established a relational network and a space for the participation of the actors involved in it (Lipari, 2012). Change seems to be embodied in the material culture of teaching practices, calling into question the sharing of a passion, taking place through the development of a sense of belonging, reinforcing common professional identities and enhancing their differences (Fabbri, & Romano, 2018). Faced with the risk of a further social polarization on integrated digital learning, at the time of the new wave of the pandemic, the Faculty community is called to deepen the study of the conditions and the characteristics of the integration of digital teaching as a development and innovation trajectory in university contexts, adopting scientific rigor, with the aim of stemming and containing the risks of impeding attitudes resulting from pre-critical and not validated visions.

Finally, the contribution aims to highlight how the central core of the embodiment of the

digital learning is organized around the construct of didactic intercorporeity and the path that leads to the incorporation of digital learning practices, occurring through intercorporeal, situated, distributed processes. The thesis argued in this article is that how to integrate digital learning and overcome the stalemate of an urgent response to educational emergency is a “research problem” for academic professionals, and that only if it is addressed in this way can produce knowledge and results that have an effective impact on the university world.

References

- Argyris C., Schön D. (1998). *Apprendimento organizzativo. Teoria, metodo e pratiche*. Milano: Guerini Editore.
- Armitage R., & Nellums L. B. (2020). *Considering inequalities in the school closure response to COVID-19*. “The Lancet”, 8 (5), e644.
- Baldassarre M., & Sasanelli L.D. (2020). *Progettare la didattica a distanza in chiave inclusiva con il Learning Designer*. «Journal of Education, Technology and Social Studies», pp. 151-162.
- Bolisani E., Fedeli M., De Marchi V., & Bierema L. (2020). *Together we win: Communities of Practice to Face the COVID Crisis in Higher Education*. In A. Wensley, & M. Evans (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on Intellectual Capital, Knowledge Management & Organisational Learning ICICKM 2020* (pp. 72 - 80).
- Brookfield S. (2017). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher. Second Edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Colonna I. (2020). *Sintomatologia di un lockdown ipermediatizzato*. In P. Ellerani, & S. Cristante (a cura di), *Le Scienze Umane alla prova della distanza sociale*. Università del Salento: Liber.
- Creswell J.W. (2015). *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches — 4th ed*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- De Filippo M., Percoco A., & Voce A. (2020). *Covid-19 e didattica a distanza. Il caso Basilicata, una regione a rischio digitale divide. Working Papers. Paper 1298*. Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei. Retrieved at: <https://services.bepress.com/feem/paper1298>
- Dell’Anna S., Pellegrini M., Ianes D., & Vivanet G. (2020). *Learning, Social, and Psychological Outcomes of Students with Moderate, Severe, and Complex Disabilities in Inclusive Education: A Systematic Review*. «International Journal of Disability, Development and Education». DOI: 10.1080/1034912X.2020.1843143.
- Di Palma D., & Belfiore P. (2020). *La trasformazione didattica universitaria ai tempi del Covid-19: un’opportunità di innovazione?* “Formazione & Insegnamento”, XVIII, 1, pp. 281-293.
- Ellerani P., Cristante S. (a cura di) (2020). *Le Scienze Umane alla prova della distanza sociale*. Università del Salento: Liber.
- Fabbri L. (2019). *Le metodologie attive di ricerca. Che cosa hanno a che fare azione, partecipazione, apprendimento e ricerca*. “Educational Reflective Practices”, 1, pp. 7-18.
- Fabbri L., Melacarne C. (2016). *Didattica dell’innovazione e innovazione didattica. L’apprendimento come condizione per il cambiamento*. In Fedeli M., Grion, V. and Frison D. (eds.) *Coinvolgere per apprendere. Metodi e tecniche partecipative per la formazione* (pp. 319-339). Lecce: Pensa MultiMedia.
- Fabbri L., & Romano A. (2017). *Metodi per l’apprendimento trasformativo. Casi, modelli, teorie*. Roma: Carocci Editore.
- Fabbri L., & Romano A. (2018). *Innovazione didattica e professionalizzazione dei saperi. Il caso del Teaching & Learning Center dell’Università di Siena*. “Education Sciences & Society”, 9 (2), 2018, pp. 8-19.
- Fabbri L., & Romano A. (2017). *Metodi per l’apprendimento trasformativo. Casi, modelli, teorie*. Roma: Carocci Editore.

- Fabbri L., & Romano A. (2019). *Engaging Transformative Organizational Learning to Promote Employability*. "New Directions on Adult and Continuing Education, Fostering Employability. Adult and Higher Education: An International Perspective", vol. 2019, n.163, pp. 53-65.
- Fabbri L., & Torlone F. (2020). *Formazione insegnanti: come apprendere dall'esperienza*. In F. Gomez Paloma (a cura di), *Embodiment & School* (pp. 39-49). Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.
- Fedeli M. (2014). *Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Methods in Higher Education*. «Educational Reflective Practices», vol. 2, 3: 37-52.
- Fedeli, M. (2018). *Promoting faculty development at university of Padova: Teaching@Learning@Unipd*. In V. Grion & A. Serbati (eds.) *Assessment of Learning or Assessment for Learning? Towards a Culture of Sustainable Assessment in Higher education* (pp. 121-126). Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.
- Fedeli, M. & Taylor, W.E. (2017). *Strategie per l'innovazione didattica. L'esperienza di un teachers' study group*. In E. Felisatti & A. Serbati (eds.), *Preparare alla professionalità docente e innovare la didattica universitaria* (pp.184-194). Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Felitti, V.J. (2017). *Future Applications of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Research*. «Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma», 10:205-206. Doi: 10.1007/s40653-017-0189-1.
- Gomez Paloma F. (a cura di) (2020). *Embodiment & School*. Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.
- Gutiérrez K.D. (2008). *Developing a Sociocritical Literacy in the Third Space*. "Reading Research Quarterly", 43, 2, pp. 148-164.
- Halford S., & Savage M., (2010). *Reconceptualizing digital social inequality*. «Information, Communication & Society», 13 (7), pp. 937-955
- Heifetz R.A., Linsky M., & Grashow A., (2019). *La pratica della leadership adattiva. Strumenti e tattiche per trasformare le organizzazioni e le comunità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Hodges C., Moore S., Lockee B., Trust T., & Bond A. (2020). *The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning*. Retrieved at: <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>
- Latour B. (2020). What protective measures can you think of so we don't go back to the pre-crisis production model? (translated from French by Stephen Muecke). Retrieved at: <https://aoc.media/opinion/2020/03/29/imaginer-les-gestes-barrieres-contre-le-retour-a-la-production-davant-crise/>.
- Lazzari, M. (2018). *Istituzioni di tecnologia didattica*. Roma: Studium Srl.
- Lipari, D. (2012). *Postfazione. Ricontestualizzare le pratiche di comunità di pratica: questioni di metodo e dimensioni etiche*. In V. Alastra, C. Kaneklin, & G. Scaratti (a cura di), *La formazione situata. Repertori di pratica* (pp. 223-251). Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Lucisano P. (2020). *Fare ricerca con gli insegnanti. I primi risultati dell'indagine nazionale SIRD "Per un confronto sulle modalità di didattica a distanza adottate nelle scuole italiane nel periodo di emergenza COVID-19"*. «Lifelong Lifewide Learning», 17 (36), pp. 3 – 25.
- Mannarini, T., Salvatore, S., Veltri G.A. (2020). *Identity, otherness, and psycho-cultural dynamics*. In T. Mannarini, S., Salvatore & G.A. Veltri (Eds). *Media and social representations of otherness. Psycho-social-cultural implications* (pp. 1-16). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Marsick V. J., Neaman A. (2018). *Adult Informal Learning*. In: Kahnwald N., Täubig V. (Hrsg.), *Informelles Lernen*. Berlin: Springer.
- Mezirow J. (2003). *Apprendimento e trasformazione*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- Mezirow J. (2016). *La teoria dell'apprendimento trasformativo*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Mezirow J., & Taylor E. W. (Eds.). (2011). *Transformative Learning: theory to practice. Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*. San Francisco: John Wiley.
- Ranieri M. (2011). *Le insidie dell'ovvio. Tecnologie educative e critiche della retorica etnocentrica*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS.
- Ranieri M. (2020). *Tecnologie per educatori socio-pedagogici, Metodi e strumenti*. Roma: Carrocci editore.

- Reicher, S. D., Drury, J., & Stott, C. (2020). *The two psychologies and Coronavirus*. *The Psychologist* (April 1). <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/two-psychologies-and-coronavirus>.
- Rivoltella P.C., & Rossi P.G. (a cura di) (2019). *Tecnologie per l'educazione*. Torino: Pearson.
- Romano A. (2020). *Innovare insieme. Verso un Network Italiano dei Teaching & Learning Center*. In Lotti A., Lampugnani A.P. (2020). *Faculty Development in Italia Valorizzazione delle competenze didattiche dei docenti universitari*. Genova: Genova University Press.
- Shani A. B., Guerri M., & Cirella S. (a cura di) (2014). *Collaborative management research. Teoria, metodi, esperienze*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Sibilio M., & Zollo I. (2020). *Corporalità e posture nell'interazione didattica: alcune riflessioni*. In F. Gomez Paloma (a cura di), *Embodiment & School* (pp. 317-323). Lecce: Pensa Multimedia.
- Steinert Y. (Ed.) (2014). *Faculty Development in the Health Professions. A Focus on Research and Practice*. Berlin: Springer.
- Vicari S. (2008). *Conoscenza e impresa*. "Sinergie", 76, pp. 43-66.
- Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (2020). *Informal and Incidental Learning in the time of COVID-19*. «Advances in Developing Human Resources». <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422320973656>.
- Weick K.E., & Sutcliffe K.M. (2007). *Managing the Unexpected: Resilient Performance in an Age of Uncertainty. Second Edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Weimer M. (2013). *Learner-centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*. Second Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Weiss P.O., Ali M., Ramassamy C., & Ali G. (2020). *Gli insegnanti in formazione durante il lockdown: percezioni, attitudini e bisogni. Un caso di studio in Martinica, Francia*. "Giornale Italiano di Educazione alla Salute, Sport e Didattica Inclusiva", 2020, Research and reflections on education, technologies and psychophysical wellbeing in difficulties - Ricerca e riflessioni su istruzione, tecnologie e benessere psicofisico in situazioni di disagio, 4 (3), <http://ojs.gsdjournal.it/index.php/gsdj/article/view/190>. fflhal-02911801ff.
- Wenger E., McDermott R., & Snyder W. M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School.